

Section I (Listing of the Claims)

A listing of the pending claims 1-20 of the application is set out below.

1. (Previously presented) A method comprising: heating a polytetrafluoroethylene material to an elevated temperature; and maintaining said heating for a time sufficient to substantially reduce a particle count character of the polytetrafluoroethylene material.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising applying a melting temperature to a portion of the polytetrafluoroethylene material for welding thereof prior to said heating.
3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 wherein the melting temperature is within about 15°C of a melting point of the polytetrafluoroethylene material.
4. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein said applying forms a heat affected zone of the portion, said heating and said maintaining to affect the heat affected zone.
5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the elevated temperature is above a glass transition temperature of the polytetrafluoroethylene material.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the elevated temperature is between about 130°C and about 260°C.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the time is between about 20 hours and about 100 hours.
8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said maintaining occurs in a periodic manner comprising:

cooling the polytetrafluoroethylene material; and reheating the polytetrafluoroethylene material.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said maintaining occurs in a periodic manner comprising:
cooling the polytetrafluoroethylene material; and
reheating the polytetrafluoroethylene material.
10. (Previously presented) A method comprising heating a polytetrafluoroethylene material to about 228°C for a sufficient time to substantially reduce a particle count character thereof.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein said heating is for about 100 hours.
12. (Original) A polytetrafluoroethylene material having a particle count character reduced by application of an elevated temperature thereto.
13. (Original) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 12 wherein the elevated temperature is between about 130° and about 260°C.
14. (Previously presented) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 12 wherein the application of the elevated temperature is for between about 20 hours and about 100 hours.
15. (Original) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 12 wherein the elevated temperature is about 228°C and the application is for about 100 hours.
16. (Previously presented) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 12 in the form of a film for contacting a substance.
17. (Original) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 16 wherein the substance is one of a liquid and a powder.

18. (Previously presented) The polytetrafluoroethylene material of claim 17 wherein the film is incorporated in a package to contain the substance.

19. (Withdrawn) A method of determining a temperature and time at which heat processible polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) fluoropolymer films are heat-treatable to reduce particle count thereof, comprising:

providing a set of heat processible PTFE fluoropolymer films;

subjecting each film of said set of heat processible PTFE fluoropolymer films to a predetermined temperature for a predetermined time of heat processing, wherein temperature and time of heat processing are varied among films in said set, to provide a range of heat processing temperatures and a range of heat processing times for heat processed films in said set;

after said heat processing, determining particle counts for the heat processed films in said set;

performing regression analysis on the particle counts to determine temperature and heat processing time at which particle count is minimized, as said determined temperature and time.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of treating a polytetrafluoroethylene film to reduce particle count character thereof, comprising exposing the film to a temperature in a range of from about 150°C to about 250°C for a time greater than 20 hours, sufficient to reduce particle count of said film to below 10 particles/ml of particles having a diameter of 0.2 micron.